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*Welfare Rolls Cut Nearly in Half*

## **Welfare Reform: Bringing Dignity to Millions (But Not to Bill Clinton)**

Welfare reform has been a huge success. Starting with state government innovations and culminating with a Republican-led federal effort to give states more flexibility, America has taken the first step toward ending the cycle of dependency and providing true assistance to struggling Americans.

- In January 1995, when the Republican Congress arrived, there were almost 14 million welfare recipients. By March 1999, that number had shrunk to 7.3 million.
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have met all the work participation rates for welfare recipients set by the 1996 welfare reform law.
- According to the Clinton administration, four times as many welfare recipients are working now than in 1992.
- According to a study by the Urban Institute, "The majority of women who left welfare between 1995 and 1997 are working. Their rates of employment are higher than other low-income mothers," and they hold similar jobs with similar or higher wages.

President Clinton is eager to be portrayed as the father of this success. Though he eventually did sign welfare reform, Bill Clinton is a man who does what's right only after exhausting every alternative. Considering his years of vetoes, flip-flopping, and obstructionism, for Bill Clinton to take credit for welfare reform is shameless — even for him. Here's a refresher.

- Clinton vowed to "end welfare as we know it," then waited a year and a half before he proposed legislation that would have *increased* welfare spending \$14 billion over five years (source: CBO).

- In a 1995 phone conversation with Clinton, columnist Ben Wattenberg called the president's welfare reform bill "soft and weak." Wattenberg wrote, "He [Clinton] agreed, saying, 'I wasn't pleased with it either.'" (*The Times Union*, 11/3/95)
- President Clinton then vetoed welfare reform *twice* — first on December 6, 1995, and again in the dark of night on January 9, 1996 — before finally signing on July 31, 1996, under the spotlight of a re-election campaign. "If it were 14 weeks after the election, he'd say no," Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York said of Clinton." (*U.S. News & World Report*, 8/12/96). Clinton also promised to undo many of the reforms.
- "At a meeting of the nation's governors, President Clinton promised to approve welfare waivers in 90 days or less, whether he agreed with the changes or not. In California, we sought a federal waiver for one reform we wanted to make to reduce welfare grants and make work more attractive than welfare. That was over a year ago, and the Clinton Administration continues to delay it at a cost to taxpayers of \$3 million a week." (California Governor Pete Wilson, 9/6/95)
- After his second welfare reform veto, Clinton praised Wisconsin's welfare reform plan and promised a federal waiver. Here's what that plan's architect, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, had to say about Clinton: "Four years after promising to end welfare, the president is bragging about a piecemeal, Washington-knows-best waiver process. We can't end the 50-year social disaster called welfare by handing out one waiver at a time." (5/18/96)
- South Carolina Governor David Beasley: "We said if you get caught [using drugs] while on welfare, you get put in treatment. If you get caught a second time, we're cutting you off. The Clinton Administration said no to that proposal."

Despite Clinton's many promises, welfare reform did not happen until Republicans took over the Congress. The last person who should be taking credit for welfare reform is Bill Clinton.

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